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9/21/2015

HW 1

Something that I have learned well and still practice today is to be able to speak French. Learning a second language is something that is very difficult and requires a lot of time and practice to get better. I would have to say that there were two strong methods I used to learn French, one was a formal education and the other was from exposure to the language from various sources. Learning a new language is definitely not easy and required multiple learning tools that helped me get better throughout the years.

My education of this language didn’t formally start until I was in the seventh grade. I took a class that taught the basics of a language, (numbers, letters, colors, basic noun structures), and from there my classes gradually mixed in vocabulary words and more difficult noun/verb structures. Once I learned the basics in middle school, high school classes got increasingly difficult. We essentially were studying the language as if we were young children in a French speaking country, for example in ninth grade we were reading books evaluated as a 6-7 reading level, sophomore year we were reading French books at a 7-8 reading level, and the trend continued throughout high school, although there were times when we were exposed to harder pieces of French literature. By the end of high school I had a conversational ability to speak French, because of the homework assignments and in class assignments that helped me learn the essentials of a language. It wasn’t till my freshmen year when first semester I took a 200 level French class that I really started to be able to speak well. The entire lecture was in French and in order to succeed in the class you had to be able to recognize the words/phrases you did know and know that well enought that you get the context of the statement. Learning a language with a formal education is useful to help you piece together phrases and fill in the blanks that eventually get you more confortable talking.

The other way I learned how to speak French was through hearing it and being exposed to it. Growing up I would hear my memere speak French to her cousins and when I started middle school my dad and I started taking trips up to Quebec where I have family, (some of which don’t speak english). From listening to people around me speak the language and from engaging in the conversations, I used the context of what people were talking about around me and from there tried to piece together the phrases into one dialogue. Once I began to do that the translations and context of conversations started getting more and more natural where I was able to carry out a conversation extremely well. Learning a new language for me was all about taking small steps and exposing myself to the language in order to get better.